

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is the Senator from New Mexico seeking time?

Mr. BINGAMAN. Yes, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

# MAKING EDUCATION A TOP PRIORITY IN THE 105TH CONGRESS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I was very pleased that at the end of the last Congress, we finally did the right thing by education. We increased funding for education. It was a bipartisan effort. We got good support in the waning days of that Congress for improvements in education.

This time I believe we should not wait until the end of the Congress. I believe that education needs to be a top priority of this Congress beginning now and continuing on through the rest of the first session and, of course, the second session as well.

For this reason, I think it is timely that Education Week, which is perhaps the preeminent weekly publication dealing with education issues at the national level, issued its report card on the condition of public education in the 50 States just as this new Congress is beginning.

The report is entitled "Quality Counts." It is a very comprehensive, thorough look at the issue, and it goes through great detail in trying to assess how each State is doing in providing education to its young people.

I recommend this report to all of my colleagues and anybody who is watching. I think it does a good job. It focuses where we need to be focused. I think it needs to be taken very seriously by this Congress.

In the area of quality of teaching, which I am sure we would all agree is essential to a strong education, this report finds that 40 percent of high school teachers lack a college degree in the subject area that they are teaching in. There are too many unlicensed teachers being used in our classrooms today. Ongoing training is still not a reality in most of our States. So the national grade that we received for quality of teaching was a C, which I think all of us who have been through the educational system know is not a stellar performance.

A second finding is about "school climate." Here the findings were that nearly half of elementary teachers have classes of 25 or more students. More than half of high school teachers see in excess of 80 students per day. Almost 70 percent of students attend high schools of 900 or more.

The reason that this last statistic is important is that we have several studies now that conclude that the quality of education and the quality of student performance goes down as the size of

the school increases. When you get a high school of more than 900 students the quality and level of student achievement goes down. So it is unfortunate that a majority of our students are in schools which our own experts tell us are too large. That is something we need to focus on nationally, and we got a C-minus on school climate because of those facts I just cited.

Third, on "overall spending," the States received a C-plus. The report found that most of the increases in spending have gone toward rising enrollment and special education and salaries for an aging work force. And we are not putting the resources into education that we should be, considering the growth in the school population.

Fourth, on "equity of funding," which means the disparities between the rich school districts and the poor school districts, the States got a B-minus. This is a little better than we have done in some of the other areas, but the report finds that the quality of the child's education still depends too greatly on skin color, on family income, and on which school district they happen to reside in.

The fifth indicator is the effective "allocation of funds." According to the report, classrooms still receive only 61 percent of total resources that go into our educational system. Too many of those resources get stopped at the administrative level. On average, there are still over 35 students for each multimedia computer in our school system. Thirty-three percent of districts have at least one serious school construction need. So in that area of allocation of funds, the States received a C-minus.

The sixth area is "standards and assessments." There the States got a B because the conclusion was that this is the area perhaps where we are making the most progress. However, in most States standards have not yet found their way into the classrooms. Even if tests were developed, we do not yet know how rigorous they are, and few States are ready to hold either the schools or the students sufficiently accountable.

The final indicator is "student achievement," which of course is the bottom line, the ultimate goal of our educational system. They did not give a grade there. They said that in student achievement our "results were disappointing." That was the phrase which was used. The report finds that only 28 percent of fourth graders nationwide ranked as being proficient in reading, which is not an adequate level of performance. Even the highest scoring States in the Nation have fewer than half of their elementary students scoring proficient in reading and in math.

Madam President, let me put this in some perspective. Many of us who try to follow education-related issues know that we have a national test that is given around the country periodically called the National Assessment of Edu-

cational Progress, or NAEP for short. This is a chart that shows trends in NAEP reading scores from 1971 through 1994. You don't need to look at this chart long before you notice that all of these lines are not going up. These lines are flat. That means that we essentially are seeing no significant improvement in reading scores by students in this period from 1971 to 1994. Madam President, we are stuck on mediocre, or perhaps stuck on even worse than that. I think this is a cause for concern.

When I look at my own State and read this report there are three areas in which New Mexico performs above the national average. We get an A for standards, compared to the B that most States get. We get a B for overall educational spending, versus the C that is given nationally by this report. And we get a B-minus for classroom resources, versus a C-minus nationally.

There are three other areas, however, in which my State of New Mexico performs worse than the national average. First, the State's test scores still are near the bottom in this National Assessment of Educational Progress test in almost all areas. Only 21 percent of the fourth graders in my State were judged to be at the proficient level in reading, and only 11 percent were judged proficient in math. Also we received a C-minus for teaching quality, compared to a C nationally. And we received a D-plus for school climate compared to a C-minus nationally.

S. 12, the Democratic leadership education bill, does address several of the key issues that are raised by this report. I think they are very important issues. Let me very briefly summarize what this bill is trying to do.

To address the low literacy rates that I described, S. 12 creates a program to increase the efforts of over 1 million teachers, parents, and volunteers in literacy training.

To lower financial barriers to college, including tuition that rose over 100 percent over the last 10 years, S. 12 proposes a \$1,500 tax credit and a \$10,000 deduction for students with a B average.

To help schools build and repair seriously deteriorating facilities, which 33 percent of all school districts report having, S. 12, provides \$5.75 billion in bond interest subsidies.

And finally, to help schools address the fact that over 70 percent of the computer equipment available is outdated and cannot provide adequate instruction and there are roughly 35 students for every modern computer, S. 12 calls for \$1.8 billion in funding for the 1994 Technology for Education Act, which was funded at the level of \$200 million in the current fiscal year.

In conclusion, let me say that this report needs to be looked at by a great many people here in the Congress and elsewhere. It clearly reinforces other findings and reports that have raised these same issues in recent months.